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DE RUEHEK #0897/01 2480817

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

R 040817Z SEP 08

FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1323

INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2634

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1012

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3025

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2410

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP

RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000897

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: KYRGYZ LOCAL ELECTIONS SET FOR OCTOBER, BUT RULES STILL UNLCEAR

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¶11. (SBU) Summary: Kyrgyzstan will hold local elections on October 5, with voters choosing local councils (keneshes) in Bishkek, 21 other cities, 40 districts, and 428 villages. Thirty-one local keneshes, including that of Osh, have terms remaining and will not hold elections. The deadline for candidate registration is September 5, and the campaign is scheduled to begin September 15. At this point, there is still uncertainty over the rules for conducting the elections. Candidates apparently can be nominated either by party list or on an individual basis, but the election code is not clear how the votes will be tabulated. We anticipate that there will be changes to the rules before the voting takes place. End Summary.

¶12. (U) On August 4, President Bakiev announced that elections to 490 local councils (keneshes) would be held on October 5, with a September 5 deadline for candidate registration. Voters will elect local councils in Bishkek, 21 other cities, 40 districts, and 428 villages. Thirty-one local Keneshes, including that of Osh, have terms remaining and will not hold elections. Each polity is composed of a number of multi-member districts, as set by the regional election commission. The city of Bishkek, for example, is divided into eleven districts, each of which will elect four deputies to the Bishkek kenesh.

¶13. (U) Registered political parties may nominate lists of candidates for local keneshes, or individuals may nominate themselves. (Note: There are persistent rumors that parliament, which reconvenes the first week of September, will eliminate the self-nomination option, allowing nomination only by party list. End note.) Party candidate lists for each kenesh must be approved at party conferences by secret ballot with election commission members observing, and the number of party candidates may not exceed the number of open seats. Each candidate must be at least 20 years old and a resident of "the respective administrative-territorial units," a wording that does not make clear whether the candidate must reside within the district he is standing to represent, or just within the city.

¶14. (U) After nomination, candidates have until September 10 to

submit registration documents to the regional election commission. Exactly what documents are required is open to some interpretation, as the section of the election code concerning local keneshes references several other sections of the election code that seemingly apply only to national elections. However, the Central Election Commission has published on its website a list of the documents required for registration, and has announced, seemingly contrary to the election code, that election deposits will not be required for local elections. Following submission of the registration documents, regional election commissions have five days either to approve a candidate's registration, or give a reasoned refusal. Aside from age and residency, the election code does not list other potential grounds for disqualifying a candidate for a local kenesh.

¶5. (U) Campaigning begins September 15, and continues until October 4, one day before polling begins. Candidates' spending is limited to 1.7 million soms (approximately \$50,000), and their registration may be cancelled if they exceed campaign spending limits by more than 0.5% of that amount. The election code contains no additional rules for campaigning for local keneshes.

¶6. (U) The exact process for voting and tabulating results in multi-member constituencies is not spelled out in the election code, which lays out only a first-past-the-post system for single member constituencies.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: Under the 2007 constitution, local councils lost authority, including the power to elect the administrative heads of villages and regional towns (now appointed by the rayon-level administrative head, who is in turn appointed by the president). Nevertheless, there is interest in these elections, and they will be a measure of how far the president's Ak Jol party will extend its

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monopoly of power. President Bakiyev has urged his party members not to run on an Ak Jol party list, but to run via self-nomination. We've also heard that administrative resources are being deployed already in favor of Ak Jol. Opposition parties Ata Meken and Ak Shumkar have announced plans to coordinate their efforts, but have not yet announced their candidates. The Erkendik party and Felix Kulov's Ar Namys party have announced that they will not participate in the council elections. We will be in contact with other parties and candidates as the registration deadline approaches.

GFOELLER